

Summary of the January 26, 2009 meeting of the Legislative Study Commission on Urban Growth and Infrastructure Issues

The Legislative Study Commission on Urban Growth and Infrastructure Issues has a board charge that includes the study of: regional planning options for water and transportation infrastructure; strategies to maximize the benefits of and mitigate the challenges presented by growth and; strategies to encourage incentive-based planning by local governments. Our Commission Cochairs have expressed the desire to identify and address discrete components of these wide-ranging issues.

The meeting held on January 26, 2009 was in part an introduction for the Commission as it was a broad overview of the challenges of urban growth.

- John Hodges-Copple, Commission member and Regional Planning Director of Triangle J Council of Governments, identified four assets to harness in managing urban growth: (1) human capital; (2) innovation; (3) quality of place and; (4) infrastructure. As it is identified in the Commission's charge, Mr. Hodges-Copple also identified water and transportation infrastructure needs as the key challenge to the management of urban growth.
- Bill Holman, the Director of State Policy at the Nicholas Institute at Duke University and co-author of the Water Allocation Study, presented water challenges. Mr. Holman stated that the State is moving into an era where water will be an ever more scarce resource and the demands on water and water infrastructure will be punctuated in urban areas. Presently, there is no centralized State role in water and wastewater services which are largely operated and maintained by local entities. Mr. Holman's remarks included a summary of the main findings and recommendations of the Water Allocation Study.
- Meg Ryan O'Donnell and Beau Mills, co-authors of the 2001 Findings and Recommendations of the Commission on Smart Growth, Growth Management, and Development, presented an overview of the Commission's report. The Commission met 14 times over 2 years and adopted the following 8 overarching goals and strategies:
 1. Promote smart growth planning in all counties and municipalities
 2. Provide resources to support smart growth planning in all jurisdictions
 3. Enhance smart growth tool box at the local level
 4. Ensure coordination of local plans and decisions with neighboring localities and with regional strategies
 5. Strengthen coordination and cooperation among regional planning entities
 6. Develop a State smart growth framework
 7. Ensure consistent oversight of State decisions related to smart growth
 8. Ensure State decisions respect local and regional planning decisions
- Lisa Hollowell, Commission staff, presented the goals and recommendations of the 21st Century Transportation Committee. Ms Hollowell identified the Committee's goals to include improving the State's road transportation system from a "D" to a "B" rating over the next 10 years and to implement an effective multimodal transportation system. Ms Hollowell summarized the Committee's policy objectives and identified numerous funding options that could be used to meet the Committee's goals including increasing the highway use tax, a phased-in increase of vehicle registration fees, and the adoption of differential fuel tax rates.